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# THE SATURDAY REVIEW

Volume 163



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## Tributes to Lady Houston—Patriot

### "For Ever England"

With the passing of Lady Houston, public life has lost a colourful and romantic figure. Many great causes and innumerable stricken citizens have lost a powerful friend.

Lady Houston has been called eccentric. Her eccentricity consisted of a fiery patriotism in an age when patriotism had lost its fire, and a forthright pen in an age when public discussion had become mealy-mouthed.

Her passion was for England. She early deplored the jeopardy into which the country had been thrust by statesmen blind to the menace of their time, and did her utmost to stir them and their constituents to a sense of the urgency of their task.

Her one foe was Bolshevism, and those whom she most bitterly attacked she lashed with invective because she thought them the friends of Bolshevism.

Implacable in her hatreds, she was insatiable in her kindnesses.

*Sunday Dispatch.*

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### A Stalwart

Lady Houston, was not only one of Britain's richest women, but one of the most vigorous and forthright of her time.

Whether they agree or not with her pronounced and emphatic views, who will gainsay the courage with which she hammered home ideals she considered to be right?

She gloried in being a stout, uncompromising patriot, and her motto was "Britain and the Empire First."

Lady Houston's gift of £100,000 to enable this country to retain the Schneider Trophy and her

other munificent gestures made her famous. With her death an energetic spirit and a sincere voice are still.

*Daily Mail.*

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### A Subscription

A friend writes that some little time ago he got up a matinée of "Journey's End" for the "Not Forgotten" fund, and wrote to Lady Houston for a subscription. He wrote that he did not ask her for a cheque or for her to take stalls, but would she send him a pound to put her on the list of those who had not forgotten the soldiers of the war?

She sent him £500, chiefly because of the "Not Forgotten" cause, but also because it was the first and only time she had ever been asked for only a pound.

*Manchester Guardian.*

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### "England on Top"

Apart from the wealth which she inherited ten years ago from her late husband, Sir Robert Houston, the shipowner, Lady Houston was a remarkable woman. A fervent patriot, she could be relied on to support patriotic enterprise, so long as it put "England on top"—the words are her own—and she will be remembered as having financed the English team in the last contest for the Schneider Trophy, and also the remarkable expedition which flew over Mount Everest; in both cases less because any assistance might be rendered to the science of flight than because the prestige of the country and Empire was heightened. . . .

She had a way of walking about on Hampstead Heath, and if she saw a man asleep on a seat in a sufficiently shabby suit, that was enough to move her compassion. When he woke up he would find a Treasury note or even a five pound note in his pocket, but the anonymous donor had passed on to her queer home at Byron Cottage.

*Yorkshire Post.*

### Spontaneous Generosity

Lady Houston was one of the most remarkable women of modern times.

Her unfailing generosity, her wonderful public spirit, and her intense patriotism aroused the admiration of the whole of the British Empire.

She was, nevertheless, several times the central figure in heated controversies, for she displayed immense vigour and decided originality in supporting causes which interested her. Her outspoken—and often satirical—comments on politics and personalities always made provocative reading.

The total disbursements made by Lady Houston from public-spirited motives during recent years were enormous.

A typical action showing her spontaneous generosity occurred last year when the famous windjammer *Herzogin Cecilie* ran on the rocks off the Devon coast. Lady Houston offered to pay for the salvage and repair of the vessel and to present it to the Admiralty. The offer, however, was declined.

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### Aid for Schneider Race

She financed the air expedition which, with the Marquess of Clydesdale as chief pilot, twice flew over Mount Everest, and it was through her intervention that Great Britain won the Schneider Trophy outright in 1931.

The Government, on grounds of economy, had decided against any attempt being made to capture the trophy for the third successive time, but Lady Houston immediately guaranteed a sum of £100,000 to cover the expenses. The Government thereupon reconsidered its decision and a team of men and machines were entered.

As it happened, there were no foreign rivals, but magnificent speed feats were achieved by the British airmen.

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### Offer to Chancellor

In the spring of 1932 Lady Houston created a sensation by offering Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, £200,000 towards the cost of national defence.

"England," she wrote, "is in deadly peril—her pride has been dragged down into the dust by Socialism."

Mr. Chamberlain replied that he could not accept gifts for expenditure on particular services over and above the amount recommended by the Government.

*Daily Mail.*

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### An Original D.B.E.

With deep regret we learn of the death, after a short illness, of Lady Houston, D.B.E., whereby the country loses a very great patriot. Lady Houston had always taken an interest in the work of *The Patriot*, and her sympathy with its views was frequently expressed in the columns of her

paper, the *Saturday Review*, by quotations from our pages. She recognised the value of "Potted Biographies," of which at one time she made a wide distribution. Her patriotic efforts on behalf of the country are well known, though it is to be regretted that they were often neglected in quarters where they should have been appreciated. On the death of her husband, Sir R. P. Houston, she handed over to the Treasury a sum of no less than £1,500,000 as death duties, though, as she and her husband were domiciled in Jersey, where there are no death duties, there was no legal liability on the estate. She gave £100,000 for the Schneider Trophy contest in 1931, and financed the Mount Everest expedition. Her offer to provide £200,000 for the air defences of London was not accepted by Mr. Neville Chamberlain as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Lady Houston was among the first five Dame Commanders of the British Empire, an honour she received in connection with her fine War work on behalf of Nursing.

*The Patriot.*

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### Great Gifts to the Nation

Lady Houston's activities were many-sided. She was a warm supporter of the "votes for women" movement and always showed the deepest interest in the welfare of women and children. During the War she gave and administered the first rest home for nurses, and she was among the first five women to be created (in 1917) Dame Commander of the British Empire.

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### £30,000 for Miners

Nobody, however, could have been more generous in her benefactions in cases of real need. When the Miners' Distress Fund was opened she sent a cheque for £30,000, accompanying the gift with a letter of advice to the miners to think for themselves and to send all Trade Unions "to the place where all bad people go."

Among many other notable gifts was one of £100,000 to St. Thomas's Hospital and one of £11,000 to the Christian Protest Movement against the religious persecution in Russia.

The contribution to the Christian Protest Movement led to an accusation by the *Daily Herald* that she was among the "Tory plotters against Russia." She at once brought a libel action, and the Socialist organ not only published a full apology, but agreed to pay £500 to a charity to be nominated by her.

Lady Houston, with delicious irony, chose as the beneficiary the Christian Protest Movement, which therefore received a substantial contribution to its funds from one of its bitterest critics.

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### The Schneider Trophy

It would take up too much space to give anything like a full list of Lady Houston's benefactions. Mention, however, must be made of her gifts of

£10,000 to the Liverpool Cathedral Fund, £1,000 to the defence fund of the Hull tramwaymen who volunteered to work during the General Strike, and were afterwards threatened with discharge, £10,000 to the Maternity and Child Welfare Fund, and £5,000 for Children's Day.

It was owing to Lady Houston's patriotic initiative that Great Britain was able successfully to defend the Schneider Trophy in the spring of 1931. The Socialist Government had decided, on economical grounds, to withdraw from the contest. Lady Houston, therefore, offered to guarantee £100,000 to defray the cost.

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### Severe Things Said

In doing so she said some severe things about the Air Ministry, and Mr. Montague, then Under Secretary for Air, angrily retorted that her wealth had "come out of the toil of the nation for whose honour she professes such pride." She wrote a stinging letter in reply, and the Under Secretary subsequently made a belated acknowledgment of the generous and patriotic nature of her gift.

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### Gift to the Exchequer

In January, 1932, it was announced that Lady Houston would pay a year's income tax for patriotic reasons, though her Jersey domicile exempted her.

She sent a cheque for £46,000 to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in January, 1933, for the income tax which would have been due from her had she been domiciled in England, and she had made a number of other large gifts this year for public purposes.

When the Herzogin Cecilie, the famous wind-jammer, was stranded last summer on the rocks near Salcombe, Devon, Lady Houston offered to bear the cost of salvaging her, but the Admiralty declined the offer.

*Morning Post.*

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### Spontaneous Gifts

When her husband died in 1926 Lady Houston inherited a fortune of more than £5,000,000. Since then the story of her gifts rivals Lord Nuffield's. She was always giving something to someone.

They were gifts made for public purposes and to private people whom she thought to be in need or who had distinguished themselves in her eyes.

But about them all there was generally this feature—they were spontaneous.

The public knew her, too, as an uncompromising patriot, who was an outspoken critic of the Government when she thought that they were "doing nothing."

Her outspokenness led her not infrequently into heated controversies. She became famous for her satirical comments on politics and personalities.

A "Houston message" always made provocative reading. It was never ordinary.

Apart from her gifts—and the total of the disbursements made by Lady Houston in recent years was enormous—Lady Houston will be remembered for her action which enabled Great Britain to win the Schneider Trophy outright in 1931. She came forward with £100,000 when there was uncertainty about a British entry. This defrayed the expenses.

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### Mount Everest Expedition

Then she financed the Houston Mount Everest Expedition in 1933—the expedition which, with the Marquis of Clydesdale as chief pilot, twice flew over Everest.

In 1932, in a letter to Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, she made an offer of £200,000 towards the cost of national defence.

But the offer was declined.

Shortly afterward, Lady Houston sent the Chancellor £40,000, which she said, "I hope you are not too proud to accept."

This, her solicitor had informed her, would be the amount due from her as income tax if she were domiciled in England, instead of being domiciled in Jersey.

Those were some of her bigger gestures.

On another occasion she gave a cheque of £5 to a woman caretaker who tackled a burglar and punched him on the jaw. "One of the bulldog breed," was how Lady Houston described her.

As a birthday gift, she gave £40,000 to King George's Jubilee Trust.

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### As "Act of Grace"

Other gifts by Lady Houston were:—

£30,000 to the Miners' Relief Fund in response to the Prince of Wales' broadcast appeal at Christmas, 1928.

£30,000 to the Lord Mayor's Distress Fund in 1929.

£10,000 to the Navy League's Fighting Fund.

£12,000 to Toc H.

£100,000 in securities to the governors of St. Thomas's Hospital.

She carried her patriotism into racing, for when she took up the sport seriously she adopted red, white and blue as her colours.

*Glasgow Evening Citizen.*

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### Husband's Tribute

The death of Sir Robert Houston affected her considerably. Sir Robert had so great a regard for her that in his will he paid a high tribute. She had twice saved his life, he said, after the doctors had despaired.

Lady Houston allowed herself little leisure. Her numerous benefactions were merely an indication of her exceptionally keen interest in public affairs.

*Daily Telegraph.*



# AVE ATQUE VALE

**T**HE *Saturday Review* bids farewell to one who controlled it for three years with burning sincerity and generous patriotism. In a world where the rich are always seeking to get richer, Lady Houston was ready to pour out her wealth without regard of consequence for the cause in which she believed. She was unique among newspaper proprietors in that not one word ever appeared under her name which she had not herself written.

Once indeed she instructed her Managing Director to write her an article which she was at the moment too tired to write. The article was sent to her and came back completely re-written except for one paragraph. The paper was just going to press when she came through on the telephone to say that after thinking things over she had come to the conclusion the article would be better without that particular paragraph. So when it was printed, after bitter lamentations from the printer at the last minute delay, it contained not a word which had not been written by her. Indeed she dictated the exact position of all the dashes she loved so well as punctuation, the capitals, italics, and eccentric type scattered about the page for the sake of emphasis.

Each week the cover design occupied her attention for hours, and attempt after attempt would be ruthlessly scrapped until at last one was evolved which she liked. On one occasion five different covers were designed and rejected and only the sixth approved. Her indomitable faculty for taking pains resisted all the attacks of age and illness and her marvellous spirit drove her on when any weaker personality would have collapsed from want of food and sleep.

## "BY HOOK OR BY CROOK"

Editorial matters were often discussed in an open car—sometimes in rain and snow—and occasionally proofs were corrected and the lay-out of illustrations settled in a busy street behind Fleet Street outside the printers. The word "impossible" she would never admit and by hook or by crook, to use an expression she loved, her will would prevail over mechanical difficulties and even the time factor itself. The printers worked for her with a will and cheered her to the echo when they drank her health at the supper which she gave them each year.

Strange duties fell to the lot of her Managing Director. The quest of an elusive gardener might carry him across England. One summer he found himself responsible for providing supplies from London for her house in Scotland, nearly 600 miles away, and that in a very hot summer when any delay meant that everything would arrive bad. The railway company took a malicious delight in sending the parcels astray, until a complete system with checks and counter-checks was organised. Again negotiations with a film company concerning the Everest Expedition led him into unfamiliar fields.

At any moment he might be called to Byron Cottage, to the yacht or to any country house that Lady Houston might have taken between Land's End and John o' Groats, but the telephone was her favourite means of communication. She could talk over the telephone without any apparent fatigue for an hour at a time and her mind moved so quickly from one subject to another that sheets of paper would be covered with notes at the end of the conversation. Until just before her death, her memory was extraordinary. It was never safe to expect that she would forget a single detail of a telephone conversation that might actually last seventy minutes.

## SHREWD JUDGMENTS

It was a fascinating thing to persuade her to talk of the past and catch glimpses of a life which had been exceedingly rich in experience. She had known all the great ones of her time and her shrewd judgments on them were tempered with sympathy and a romantic touch of pathos. She was often urged to write her memoirs, but would only smile and say, "I have forgotten it all, my dear."

"Historicus" on another page says something of that mystic experience which so strongly influenced her life. She told the story of how from the depths she had called upon the Lord and her cry had been answered. Thenceforward she was convinced that courage was the answer to every problem and "she had no fear to die."

Lady Houston made only one speech in her life—at the luncheon given to inaugurate the "Wings Over Everest" film. Nothing could have been more touching than the simple words she used about the Everest Expedition, though she said that she was terribly nervous.

In the following pages the little band of writers whom she had gathered round her and whose articles she inspired, give their impressions of Lady Houston as they knew her, and it is fitting that they should be prefaced by the following letter from Air Commodore P. F. M. Fellowes, D.S.O., the Leader of the Houston Mount Everest Flight.

As the Leader of the Houston Mount Everest Flight, an expedition which would never have been launched but for the vivid patriotic imaginings of the late Dame Lucy Houston, may I be allowed to pay my Tribute to a most remarkable woman.

From the moment I took my place in her team, I, as we all did, felt the force of her very human, and by that I mean all that word can connote, personality. Praise, blame or warm-hearted interest was unstintingly given.

It is astounding to think that at the age of 75 such a novel project appealed to her as it did. She was to me the embodiment of intense patriotism, as she saw it, courage and shrewdness.

Her heart was great in its affections and loyalties and also in its hates. She cannot but leave a blank to friend or enemy, so vivid was her personality.

In all that has gone before, nothing has been said of the affection she inspired among those who served her and were loyal to their salt. Yet this was perhaps her greatest gift, and in this spirit the *Saturday Review* bids her farewell.

H.W.A.

# "L. H."

By "Historicus"

**M**MORLEY ROBERTS, years ago, wrote one of the most tender little idylls in the language, a piece of frank sentiment that was almost sentimentality.

It was called "The Young Man Who Stroked Cats."

Few, I suppose, remember it. It concerned a young romantic whose first love affair was lived out over the telephone. It ended with the ringing of a telephone bell that might be the precursor of news that his lady was dead—or that she was safely through a serious operation. By my loss, I am reminded of it.

I have sat for hours in the familiar bedroom in Byron Cottage, I have had secret and swift assignations in a motor car parked in a side street while the fate of Empires was discussed—but my memory of "L.H." is chiefly the memory of the voice on the telephone.

We spoke to each other so on most days of the week and at all hours of the clock. They were not casual or desultory talks. They were long conversations, lasting, sometimes, for the major part of an hour—conversations that seemed to exhaust all topics, but that were most often renewed again after a very short interval.

Sometimes the after-thought was not spoken into the telephone. It came by messenger, written in pencil, and signed always by the two initials. But the written message, like the good talk, was somehow impregnated by a peculiar intimacy that R.L.S. would have relished. It bound us in a queer association of friendship, love and conspiracy.

## AGELESS YOUTH

Lady Houston was actually old enough to be my grandmother, but I never realised it, nor do I realise it now. The voice and the mind were younger than mine. The vigorous purpose and the gusty humour were ageless. The tenderness was incarnate youth.

Those who have known her only as a public character, a kind of modern Cobbett in a woman's frame, some being that Shakespeare might have created and Nance Oldfield might have played, knew but a little part of Lucy Houston. She was as many sided as Cleopatra, whose zest and charm she shared, and the best epitaph I have seen of her in all that has been written in the press is the single sentence—"Implacable in her hatreds, she was insatiable in her kindnesses."

Before her marriage to Robert Houston I had not met her. In all the time of my acquaintance she was a sick woman, a very sick woman. The body was supported only by that dominant will. She drew the power to live from her indomitable spirit and her pervasive humour.

Goschen said of Hicks Beach, "He is the only man I have ever known who habitually thinks

angrily." In politics that was true of Lucy Houston. The machinations of the Left enraged her: the weakness of the Right infuriated her. She had no half-tones in her mind. She lay there with the roaring wrath and the Homeric impatience of a superman pent in the tired frame of an old lady. Knowing in what jeopardy her country stood, realising how urgent was the need for action, sensing how dangerous must be compromise in an age when men were dividing right and left on an unbridgeable gulf of principle, she would do nothing but write and urge others to write and act, and her real daily tragedy was that nobody could act quickly or decisively enough to satisfy her own conception of movement.

To say that she was a woman of extremes is to say what all say. Her friends were her friends: her country's foes were her foes. He that was not with her was against her. Any hesitant loyalty was rank treachery to her forthright mind. When the abdication of Edward VIII became virtually certain her whole being flashed into passionate anger. She raged as some Greek Fury would have raged. To her a friend was being betrayed, not only by the active politicians who would not help him, but by those around him who would not break through the barriers of etiquette and official duty to espouse his cause.

## THE LOST CAUSE

Her daemonic energy during that week was frightening in its intensity. It killed her. In that last display of personal devotion and loyalty she drew more heavily on the already over-taxed body than nature could permit. Sleepless, unable to take nourishment, she drove her mind without mercy, without rest—and saw her cause go down.

And yet—in the midst of her anxiety and her glorious rage—she talked as she always talked, blending her political polemics with sudden discursions into psychiatry, with little digressions into daring anecdote, with chuckles over the grotesqueries of life. She would crow like Peter Pan over some dialectical masterstroke she had executed or conceived. She would ask humbly, like a child, for advice about some technical matter that she had not before encountered—the exact working of some law, the standing of some foreign investment, the relations between two nations. She would deliver ringing fiats based on the advice that she but two moments before received, but which her strong, masculine mind had already assimilated. And, at the end, always, even when the telephone talk had been largely a telephone quarrel, she would end, "Well, I must try and get some rest. These doctors can do nothing but tell me I am working too hard. Goodnight, my dear—and God bless you!"

She had a mystic's faith in God. Once in a time of terrible trouble, when it was doubtful if she was

to be allowed her liberty, when her future was at hazard, she had experienced something very like the ecstasy of a Saint. She had had some vision, or half-vision. Incessant prayer—the prayer of a child—“Oh, God, help me!”—had been miraculously answered. “Sudden, the worst turns best to the brave,” is the line that embodies that experience. And afterwards her faith was as impregnable as it was simple, and as unashamed.

I remember as vividly as I remember anything about her, sitting late one afternoon in that perpetual sick room of hers, she tucked up on the low bed, with the red head-dress and the big dressing-gown and the careful little blond curl all giving her an odd air of coquetry, and I hunched in the big chair, sipping the china tea and munching the sweet orange cake that it was her delight to provide for me, while she told me her creed. It was like some strange chapter from William James’ “Varieties of Religious Experience.” She was as sincere as a young nun. The stormy past, the present agitations, were forgotten. Forgotten too, was the episode of the nineties that she had just related with all the *argot* of its time. Swept into a complete oblivion were the epithets and the damnations that she had been hurling a few

moments before at the two statesmen whose evil she deemed herself born to overbear.

When she had finished we sat silent for a little while in the dim room that was lit only by the dancing flames of the big fire. And then, suddenly—“And now, my dear, what are we going to do about this little beast . . .” We were back at the abiding interest, and the quiet worshipper of God was again a Boadicea leading the righteous against the unrighteous in a holy war.

That was, indeed, her secret, that politics for her was not a dismal science or an affair of “ins and outs,” but a veritable Jihad. There could be no compromises. The terms must be extermination or unconditional surrender.

How greatly she served her fellows by rallying the forces of patriotism only history can say. That she gave us a rallying ground meant that she gave us new heart for a battle that at times seemed a lost fight. It was a noble service.

Her career, as she told it to me in snatches, was a strange romance. I am not here concerned with it. Her character, as she revealed it to me, was greater and more balanced than she let the world guess.

I salute her in passing.

“Goodnight, my dear—and God bless you.”

## She Lived for England

By Meriel Buchanan

THE closing days of 1936 were marked by two great tragedies, the abdication of our beloved King Edward VIII and the death of Lady Houston.

When I was asked by her in April 1935 to write for the *Saturday Review* I was overjoyed, for I had long been filled with admiration for her courage and for the driving force with which she attacked the enemies of England in her paper.

I shall never forget the first interview I had with Lady Houston. The flower-filled room, the windows wide open to the Spring evening and to the song of blackbirds in the garden, and that amazing, vivid, virile personality, the shrewd, brilliant eyes which I felt read all my thoughts and probed to the depths of all my weaknesses. With her one could never equivocate, or quibble or waver. She demanded from all with whom she came in contact the same forthright honesty, the same undeviating courage with which she herself faced life. The slightest sign of faltering on one's part and she would flash out one of her quick, characteristic rebukes, and yet the occasional abruptness of her manner would be redeemed by the sudden human, brilliant smile which would illuminate her face and make one forget one's momentary embarrassment.

All through the thirty-four months during which it has been my privilege to work for Lady Houston she has shown me nothing but kindness and consideration, and I have been continually filled with admiration and wonder for her indomitable energy

in the face of ill-health, her flaming courage, her selfless patriotism and loyalty, her unquenchable love for her country.

Under her guidance the *Saturday Review* continued week after week to expose the duplicity of the Government, the evils of Communism and the secret propaganda which is trying to undermine the Empire. There were, it is true, a certain number of blind and foolish members of the public who, wrapped in their smug and complacent security, chose to sneer at these exposures, but there can be no doubt at all that this one paper which dared to tell the truth had a tremendous influence in the country, an influence which was steadily increasing, and which day by day was awakening the people from their lethargy and opening their eyes to the danger which is threatening them.

Only the other day a message was sent me from a friend in Spain, a message which, alas, I had not time to pass on to Lady Houston, thanking her in the name of General Mola for her support, and expressing the gratitude of the forces of law and order in Spain for her courageous attitude and for her fight against Communism.

Her passing leaves an irreparable void in our midst, and a memory we shall all cherish of a woman who never lived for herself but for England and the Empire, a woman who gave not only her great wealth, but her time and all her strength for this one sacred cause, not asking for recognition or reward, but only for a soldier's privilege to serve her country.



# A Tribute

By Hamadryad

I FIRST met Lady Houston a little more than two years ago. Some advice was wanted about a lawn at Byron Cottage and a mutual friend suggested, on very slender evidence, that I could supply it. If I felt nervous about posing as an authority on Hampstead lawns I might have spared myself the trouble. I duly made my way to Byron Cottage at the time appointed, but the matter of the lawn was never mentioned nor, as I now know, would my advice have been taken if it had been tendered.

Her Ladyship shook hands, hospitably plied me with sherry and then asked me what I thought of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. I had my ideas about Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—who has not?—but was not at all certain that they would be well received. Again, apprehension was groundless. Lady Houston had enough ideas about Mr. Ramsay MacDonald for two. We discussed Mr. Ramsay MacDonald for two hours. Just before it was time for me to leave the conversation turned to the more interesting topic of food, and I left Byron Cottage pledged to try Lady Houston's famous recipe for steak and kidney pudding.

Thereafter I had, I suppose, something under a dozen conversations with Lady Houston. She would write, telephone or even telegraph that she wished to discuss with me a matter of urgent and secret importance, and off I would go, usually at some inconvenience, to Byron Cottage or even to Poole Harbour. By the time I arrived the matter of urgent secret importance would have passed from mind and we would spend a couple of hours discussing Mr. Ramsay MacDonald or Mr. Baldwin or some other grievous menace to the national weal.

## WHEN PEOPLE DISAGREE

Only on one occasion, as I remember, did she really ask for advice. I said, "But my dear lady, you won't take my advice even if I feel competent to give it." She said, "I know I won't, but I like to know when people disagree with me." Now it has been my experience that people with very strong opinions usually resent being disagreed with, especially on the subject of politics.

In paying my small tribute of praise to a woman gifted beyond the common run with great qualities of mind and heart I realise that my impressions are essentially those of a casual rather than of an intimate friend. I do not think that made a deal of difference. You could not help liking her and wanting to be nice to her, nor could you fail to observe that despite all her punctual thunderbolts launched at her political *bêtes noires*—and though her condemnations were usually overweighted, I never knew them to be substantially misdirected—her own instinct was to be nice to everybody else. That is not the common instinct. In wealthy

women of strong opinions and resolute will it is so rare as to be a virtue.

No one has ever doubted, or I think could ever doubt, the disinterestedness and sincerity of her patriotism. If she called a politician a traitor it was because she really thought him so and not because of some private grudge or collateral prejudice. Equally it was because she put her thoughts into the only language she knew that fitted them, and not on the principle that no stick is too thick to beat a politician with. On one or two occasions I tactfully essayed to convince her that the rapier was mightier than the bludgeon, but without the slightest result. She said what she thought was the exact truth, and nothing, I am convinced, would have persuaded her to do otherwise.

## NOSE FOR NEWS

In fact her political judgment, to my way of thinking at least, was extremely sound. She might err to the extent of calling a spade a sanguinary shovel but at least she never pretended that it was an instrument of beneficent precision. Very little that appeared in print escaped her and her "nose" for anything written or said that confirmed her own views would have done justice to a Fleet-street veteran.

All women of great ability and force of character have their foibles and their eccentricities and Lady Houston had hers. It pleased her to think that the Government trembled with every fresh launching of her weekly thunderbolt and nothing would persuade her that no politician ever becomes a Cabinet Minister without acquiring a self-satisfaction so super-rhinocerine that even the shouts of an infuriated nation cannot penetrate it.

Nevertheless I have known few people who combined their foibles with more penetrating common sense. A vainer person would have stuck to high politics. A more commonplace person would have stuck to her cold cures and recipes for steak and kidney pudding. Lady Houston, with a sense of values that few men in public life possess, put one on the front page of her paper and the other on the back.

There is little more that I can say. There is not much charity in the world to-day, even in quarters where you would most expect to find it. This great lady, who defied age as bravely as she defied the King's enemies, who cared so little to be a great lady and so much to be a good patriot, asked, and her memory asks, charity from none. She loved her country and went into action with flags flying and all her guns firing against those whom she deemed to be its enemies, or its weak or dishonest servants. Tens of thousands of her countrymen and countrywomen will regret the passing of so colourful a figure and the silencing of so courageous a voice.

# Lady Houston—How I First Met Her

By Comyns Beaumont

**I**T is over six years ago that I first encountered Lady Houston in the flesh. She was a voracious reader of newspapers of all sorts and conditions, and among others read a weekly journal I was editing to which I contributed a weekly commentary that was inclined to be critical of the then Government.

She started a personal correspondence with me by letter and telegram the gist of which was that my attacks were too mild. "You cannot hammer Baldwin enough," she wrote on one occasion. I told her even as it was it was difficult enough to keep in with the directors, who held the firm belief that a newspaper to be successful should seek to please everyone and not offend anybody's political susceptibilities. This roused Lady Houston to characteristic indignation.

She sent a long telegram from France and asked how England was to be saved by men so lacking in courage and conviction. She asked if I would go over and see her. So behold a day when I arrived at Rouen, and in due course a fast motor boat pulled up along the river quay, with a smart young officer and crew. Off we went downstream for some miles until at length we reached her beautiful white and gold yacht *Liberty*, flying the Union Jack. The captain received me in state, took me to a saloon where drinks were laid out, and I was told that her ladyship would be pleased to receive me shortly.

## A PROPOSITION

In due time I was conducted to her state saloon, where, in a corner embowered in flowers, sat my hostess. She gave me a winning smile—she had a most attractive smile—and a plump white hand. She wore a pink turban, with a glittering jewel in the centre, and on either side little golden curls crept out. Over her shoulders was set a priceless sable cloak, for the afternoon was chilly. Immediately, as she poured out tea, she plunged in *medias res*. Why did I work for people who had no red blood in their veins? I told her needs must when the devil drives, and after a discussion upon the newspaper world in general, she asked me suddenly, "Why don't you start your own weekly?"

My reply was that nothing would please me better, but to aspire to a large circulation and influence the public to any degree, such a paper would have to be a commercial success and would require a large capital.

"Suppose you produced an attractive twopenny weekly," she said, "mixing up the world, the flesh, and the devil—giving the devils of politicians their due—could you get a circulation of a quarter of a million?" That, at any rate, was her idea, and she believed a patriotic weekly, "dressing the shop window cleverly," would be a winner, a

political force, and a commercial success. But how much would it need? Estimating rapidly on such a scheme I told her I thought a hundred and fifty thousand pounds would not be too much.

"I will put up a hundred thousand for you," she said, "if you can find the odd fifty." It was said so suddenly and unexpectedly that astonishment plainly showed itself on my features. She burst into a merry fit of laughter.

"You didn't expect that, did you?" she asked.

"I certainly did not, Lady Houston," I replied. "It is a most generous offer."

"But mind you," she continued, "I am not throwing this money away. We have to get out the right sort of paper. I will work out my ideas and let you improve on them."

The plan eventually fell through because of a variety of circumstances. "The Pepper Pot," her very characteristic idea of the name of the paper, together with her ideas of political treatment did not appeal to other possible investors, and finally, for personal reasons, the scheme was dropped. But it began a friendship which lasted, I hope, undiminished, until alas! her passing away so unexpectedly a few days ago.

## THE COLD CURE

I remember well how on one occasion visiting her in her bedroom at Byron Cottage I had the misfortune to cough. The more I tried to stop the worse it became. She turned a critical eye on me.

"Have you taken my cold cure, my dear?"

When I had to admit I had not, she rang for her maid and demanded a table spoon. Among all the paraphernalia which littered her bedside I saw an ominous bottle of yellow vaseline. She dug the spoon in and produced a big spoonful of the horrid stuff.

"Swallow that," she commanded.

"I can't, really," I protested, shuddering at the sight of it.

"You men are all cowards! Go on, my dear, it will stop you coughing."

"Well, if I do I shall be sick."

"Then be sick. The windows are all open." She watched me swallow the greasy mess, with a triumphant smile. It stopped my coughing.

"There you are!" she exclaimed, "Never miss my cold cure again."

And she immediately returned to the iniquities of the Government.

These peculiarities aside Lady Houston was not merely a great personality and an intense patriot, but she possessed robust common sense and the mentality, in many ways, of a man. She had also the feminine gift of jumping to conclusions rapidly, wittily, and sometimes wrongly. But mainly she was right.



# Lady Houston and the Navy

By Periscope

**I**N the death of Lady Houston, the Royal Navy has lost a very good friend. During her lifetime there were few naval officers or men who would have expressed themselves wholeheartedly on her side against the Government. That was because the Royal Navy is taught that on no account must it meddle in politics or express political views except to the ballot box. But the newspapers gave to the sailor some insight into politics, and in the last three decades the sailor has realised more and more just how and where the politician has let him down.

While he himself was not permitted to criticise the politician he found in Lady Houston a fearless critic when criticism was due. And if there is one class of person who has had cause to criticise the politician in the past years it has been the sailor.

To the lay mind the sacrifice of twenty cruisers by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in order to achieve agreement at the London Naval Conference of 1930 may seem a small thing. To the sailor it was a very big thing. Here was a politician, one who knew less than nothing about sea warfare and the protection of the vital trade routes of the British Empire, suddenly deciding that the Empire needed fifty cruisers instead of seventy. To make matters worse the politician took this decision in the face of his naval advisers, Lord Jellicoe and Lord Beatty, whom the Navy trusted.

## A GREAT CRUSADER

This sacrifice of cruisers by the politicians was only one of a series of moves which invoked in the officers and men of the Navy a profound distrust for those in power over them. And Lady Houston was regarded in the ships of the Fleet as a great crusader who had the courage to tell these gentry just how they had frittered away the security of the British Empire in order to gain or retain their precious offices.

Not only in this matter of ships was Lady Houston looked to by the wardroom and the broadside mess as a courageous friend who knew how to hit hard when hard hitting was needed. The officers and men knew that there was never an injustice done in the fleet but that she would take up the cudgels and see that wrongs were righted, and that the wrongdoers ate humble pie to such an extent that they would not repeat the experiment.

For many years the naval officer has been suffering under the intolerable injustice of being ineligible for marriage allowance, while his brother officers in the Army and Royal Air Force draw marriage allowance. To this has been added the injustice of free passages to the wives and families of officers of every service except the Royal Navy—the Service which takes a man away from his family more than any other. These

palpable injustices have existed for many years, but always the naval officer has buoyed himself up with the hope that, when the time was ripe, Lady Houston would champion their cause and lay it before the denizens of Whitehall in such a manner that it could not be ignored and shelved as it so often has.

Now the naval officer sees the perpetuation of this injustice simply because he can see no figure sufficiently disinterested and at the same time so powerful in the cause of justice.

## STAINS ON THE NAVY

The Navy feels that, had Lady Houston had her way with the regulations enforcing the cuts of pay, instead of a gang of secretaries with eyes only for their own advantage, there would never have been upon the Royal Navy the stain of the mutinies at Invergordon, nor the stains which have under the sacred name of axes cut off in their prime many careers for which the Navy and Empire now has the greatest need.

Conditions and weapons of warfare may have changed, but two things have not changed—the respect of the sailor for what is commonly but vulgarly called guts, and the need for looking to the welfare of the meanest if the greatest service is to be won from one and all in a great Service.

The Navy realises that Lady Houston had a deep realisation of these truths, and that she never spared herself in trying to inculcate them into Whitehall.

Thus the Royal Navy has lost in Lady Houston a friend whom it both trusted and respected.

## Hon Omnis Morieris

Not yours the way of compromise,  
The easy path the politicians tread,  
Not yours the joy of saying things to please  
Or making Black assume the innocence of White  
To gull the multitude:  
Not yours the wish to hide the ugly truth,  
Shaking dull, slumbrous Whitehall from its  
soft repose.  
Not yours the urge to foist specious shams  
Of a Utopian Paradise upon a people  
Unarmed for their undoing.  
Courage you taught us and your simple creed  
Of loyalty to Crown, to country and to Empire  
overseas,  
With strength of arm and purpose seeking  
Peace  
And seeing others keep it.

Your Spirit lives to spur us still  
Your Faith an ever-burning beacon,  
Your Life a lesson to the weak  
To guide them in their faltering.

C.R.

# THE IMPERIAL CRUSADER

By Clive Rattigan

LADY HOUSTON had her Gospel of Empire and she preached it and acted up to it with all the fervour that was part of her fiery crusading nature.

She was not a woman to admit any reservations to the loyalties she held sacred. The Crown was to her something very much more than an Imperial symbol; it was the repository of the *sacra sacrorum* of the whole English race. (The term English she characteristically always preferred to British.)

Any attempt to interfere with the prerogatives of the Crown or to modify in any way the whole-hearted allegiance she felt was due to it met with her uncompromising hostility, whether the offenders were the Home Government or a Dominion Government.

And that hostility was never passive; it was open and avowed and expressed in the most blistering language that Lady Houston could command.

Whitehall might sit with "sealed lips" while Mr. de Valera inaugurated his "fancy" constitutions and citizenship. Not so Lady Houston. She addressed him in telegraphic messages the wording of which was well calculated to fuse the wires.

She did not hold with the theory that the delicacy of Imperial relationships rendered necessary the employment on occasions of diplomatic tact and language. For tact at any time she had little use; it was only another word for weakness, for that lack of courage which shrank from plain speaking and merely led to further misunderstandings.

## FAMILY POLITICS

As for diplomatic language between members of the same Imperial family, could anything, she argued, be more futile or incongruous? If relations could not speak freely with one another, what was their relationship worth?

She had not the slightest inclination to meddle in any Dominion's purely local affairs; the members of the Imperial family had, of course, she recognised, their own matters of private concern which were nobody's business but their own.

But when it came to matters that affected England or the Empire as a whole, as well as a particular Dominion, she claimed that every patriot, whatever his or her domicile, had the right and the duty to offer criticism or register a vigorous protest if the occasion seemed to warrant opposition to the action being, or proposed to be, taken.

Nor had she any delusions as to the infallibility of Governments, Home or Dominion. Most of them she regarded as exceedingly prone to error, if nothing worse. Nor, she was convinced, did they in their actions and general conduct invariably represent the People's voice.

For that reason, too, they need not be treated as sacrosanct by anyone within the family circle who

doubted their wisdom and was in the position to offer really free and independent criticism.

Her main pre-occupation was, of course, with the sins of commission and omission of the "National" Government, with the weak state of the country's defences, the menace of Bolshevism and League "dangers."

But her interest in and concern for the Empire was shown by the setting aside each week of certain pages in the *Saturday Review* for the inclusion of Imperial news and articles.

This was for her a truly self-denying ordinance, for there was never enough space in any issue for all her demands on it.

She realised, however, the need of promoting understanding between the various peoples of the Empire and made this gesture in the hope that it might help towards that closer union in sentiment that all true patriots must desire.

Nor did she fail to perceive that knowledge of our Imperial past was necessary to a full appreciation of the conditions and problems of the present, and for this purpose Professor A. P. Newton, one of the greatest living authorities on Imperial history, was commissioned to write each week the story of "Forgotten Deeds" in our Empire's annals.

## OUR EMPIRE

Not an inch of that Empire would she have willingly given or bartered away.

The offer of a strip of our Somaliland Protectorate to stave off the Italo-Abyssinian war aroused her to furious indignation.

But that was only one of several counts in her fierce indictment of what she called the National Government's "Policy of Surrender."

The Egyptian Treaty formed another of those counts, while the gravest of all from her point of view was the passing of the Government of India Act providing for provincial autonomy and "full responsibility at the Centre."

This she regarded as a betrayal of the Indian masses and the handing over of India to the avowed and most bitter enemies of England. Disaster, she predicted, must inevitably follow this foolishly idealistic experiment.

Her whole soul was filled with sorrow at the thought of our waning prestige in the East, and it was this that persuaded her to finance the Everest Flight Expedition, because, as she said, a great exploit such as the conquest from the air of the world's highest peak ought to capture the imagination of the Indian peoples and show them that Englishmen still possessed the qualities that had won for them their Empire.

Fierce Crusader she may have been, but her convictions were genuine and her burning enthusiasm was a much-needed stimulating force.

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# MY GREATEST FRIEND

By the Writer of "Eve in Paris"

LADY HOUSTON had spent a considerable time in France, talked French fluently, and made many friends in Paris. The French papers always spoke of her admiringly, chronicling her patriotic actions, holding up her munificence as an example to "milliardaires" of their own country. Their obituary notices of a lady whose loss to England is disastrous are characterised by good taste and feeling.

The writer, one of Lady Houston's oldest friends, cherishes the memory of a tender affection extending through the years, and recalls happy care-free days of youth together. Younger generations cannot imagine what the woman they knew as a patriot, a politician, and, alas, an invalid, was when she first appeared in London, causing a sensation by her extreme youth and beauty.

Small, exquisitely made, with tiny waist, and beautiful shoulders, her carriage was superb, her head proudly carried; her taste in dress was infallible, coming up to the highest standards of Parisian elegance, then far ahead of England in such matters. The great *couturier* Worth once said to her, "Madame, you say you have designed the dress you wear yourself; let me tell you I could do no better."

Spontaneous and natural, she possessed the rare gift of wit, which rendered her conversation a delight. Men adored her. It was the day of the masher, tailored by Poole, wearing invariably a gardenia in the buttonhole, given to chaff, and practical joking, but sound at heart, and intelligent under a mask of inanity. This *jeunesse dorée* was at her feet; the elders also were charmed.

Taking a house in Portland Place, she lived quietly, with a very pretty younger sister and a small circle of intimate friends. One day the famous author and explorer, Henry Savage Landor, came to the writer in despair because she had refused to marry him, and announced his intention of committing suicide. It was hard to dissuade him; and before his death, unmarried, in Florence he showed the writer an old photograph of Lady Houston declaring "She was the love of my life."

SHE married Lord Byron in the 'nineties, bought a sister's house at Hampstead, and re-christened it "Byron Cottage." Never very robust, she could not lead a life of strenuous gaieties, and was happier in her home adjoining the Heath, with its beautiful old trees and rose-gardens, where she received her friends, entertaining eminent personages, great actresses like Réjane, poets, painters, musicians, and her neighbour, Pavlova. She was an ardent feminist, and did much for the Cause. When its leader, Mrs. Pankhurst, found herself in pecuniary difficul-

ties, Lady Byron came to the rescue, organising a subscription, and heading it with a handsome donation. Later, in war-time, she devoted her energies to the service of her country, being, in recognition of her patriotism, awarded the Order of D.B.E. by H.M. King George V.

Left a widow, she married, in Paris, Sir Robert Houston, and after his death remained abroad in her palatial yacht *Liberty*, often moored in some charming secluded spot on the Seine, on the Riviera, at Cannes, Nice, Beauvallon, then unspoiled among mimosa groves and fields of narcissi, or anchored in the beautiful Bay of Arcachon, its silence disturbed only by rippling waters and sea-mews calling—sounds she loved.

RECOVERING a measure of strength, she longed for England, and returned, paying to the Treasury as an act of grace a million and a half sterling, a sum it could not legally have claimed, for taxes.

Continuing her private charities, the extent of which will never be known, she soon became a public character, owing to her princely gifts for national causes, and the keen interest she took in politics. Her object in life was to use her wealth for the good of her country, and to fight those whom she considered its enemies.

Gifted with keen intelligence, she possessed the great virtues of indomitable courage, generosity, magnanimity, forgiving those who personally injured her, pity for the helpless and suffering. Hers was a vivid and delightful personality, which can never be forgotten, and her passing is an irreparable loss to those who loved her.

## Italy's Tribute

Lady Houston, because she had, with admirable generosity, devoted hundreds of thousands of pounds to national objects and because not long ago she obtained control of the *Saturday Review* and made it a tribune of the highest and most emphatic patriotism, was one of the most popular and well-beloved personalities in the country...

Her greatest title to fame was the inspiration that she gave to her paper; her unceasing warring against poisonous propaganda of Bolshevism remains in the memories of all and was listened to by a large public.

During the Abyssinian campaign the *Saturday Review* defended with a far-seeing realism and with the keenest enthusiasm the good right of Italy. During these last months, Lady Houston, in her paper was the strongest supporter in England of the Anglo-Italian agreement that has just been signed.

*Il Messaggero*  
(in its obituary notice of Lady Houston).



# The Miner

By Dan Russell

**T**HE green grass in the big meadow gathered strength from the rays of the spring sun. Soon it would be long and lush, but at the moment it was still short and wiry. Ant hills were dotted at intervals over its surface like big warts. It was to these ant hills that the green woodpeckers came to feed, for on disturbing the soil myriads of ants could be seen scurrying agitatedly about. The ant hills were not the only blemishes on the green meadow, for all across the northern corner were little heaps of earth as big as inverted pudding basins; the heaps near the hedge were old and dry, but those further out in the field were new and fresh. There was no sign of any hole by these heaps, but if you had taken a spade and dug you would have discovered that a tunnel ran beneath them. The heaps were the surplus earth which had been scraped out by the busy miner.

These runs near the surface were only the tunnels made by the mole in his ceaseless search for food. At a deeper level was a second network of tunnels which were the true roads which the mole used regularly in his journeys. These roads all connected together and in the midst of them was the fortress or nest where the miner spent his scanty hours of rest. This nest was about the size of a plum pudding and was lined with dried grass and leaves. Leading sharply downwards from it and then turning upwards was the bolt hole which would be used in an emergency such as a weasel finding his way into the nest.

## Searching for Food

At this moment the nest was empty, for the mole was in one of his field tunnels searching for food. He worked steadily on, digging at an almost incredible speed. He was a curious looking creature, but he was admirably adapted for his mode of life. His body was long and sausage like. The fur was set perpendicularly so that no matter if he went backwards or forwards his coat was always smooth and tidy. This tidiness was also helped by the fact that each hair was slightly thicker at the middle than at the ends. His snout was long and delicate, for it was on his sense of smell that he mainly depended to catch his quarry; his hearing, too, was very acute. His eyes were so small as to be almost invisible. They were sunk right beneath the dense fur of his head. In his subterranean existence he had very little use for them. His fore paws were most remarkable. They were turned sideways and looked exactly like powerful little hands. They had no hair upon them, and were a fleshy pink in colour.

The mole drove his tunnel onwards, pausing every now and then to listen. He heard the infinitesimal noise of a moving worm and turned his tunnel towards it. With rapid strokes of his spade like paws he dug at enormous speed. Within

a few seconds he was up to the luckless worm and seized it. His ferocity was almost ludicrous. He worried the worm as a terrier worries a rat. He shook it and flung it about as though it was a deadly and powerful foe. Finally he tore it to shreds and devoured it. He had hardly finished his meal before he was off again to find more food. His appetite was enormous. He ate more than his own weight in worms and grubs every day, and so rapid were his digestive processes that if he was without food for only a short time he would die. Much and very often was his motto for feeding.

He fared well that morning, for worms and grubs were plentiful. The soil in which he was digging was moist and the worms were moving very near the surface. The mole's sensitive snout broke the thin crust and sniffed at the open air. Something in the air made him scramble hastily from his tunnel and waddle off over the open field. So delicate was that long snout that he had winded a female although she was on the other side of the field.

## Cave-Man Lover

On he went, looking very clumsy in this unusual environment. Every few moments he stopped and searched the air with his nose. She was still there, but there was another scent mingled with hers; another male was with her. The mole bristled with anger. He was a real cave man of a lover and would fight to the death for his bride. And next to eating he loved fighting.

On he went until he came upon them by the hedge. A female mole was sitting there and in front of her was another male. Our mole made no bones about it, but went straight in to fight. Nor was his opponent loth to accept the challenge. With tooth and claw they fought, and it was plain that this was no mock combat, but a fight to the death. The powerful fore feet raked back and side and the sharp teeth ripped and slashed. Both were bleeding from many wounds, but neither would give in. It ended suddenly. Our mole turned over on his back and raked with his paws against the unprotected belly of the other. Through skin and flesh went those strong claws and the victim was disembowelled.

Not satisfied with having won his fight the little villain fell on the carcase and rent it into pieces as he had the worm. He was hurt and bleeding, but not badly. The female had remained seemingly indifferent to the battle which had been waged for her.

When even his savage fury had worn itself out the mole turned to his new found mate and roughly pushed her in front of him towards his meadow fortress. Once inside she would be fairly safe and he could go and look for food. He was feeling hungry, for it was quite fifteen minutes since he had fed. Hurriedly the miner escorted his bride to her nest and then set off to fill his empty stomach.

# A Call to Save the League!

By Robert Machray

THAT strange irony that seems inseparable from most human affairs, particularly in high politics, was never more clearly shown than in the opening days of the new year. On January 1 there appeared in the papers a "Declaration on the Peace of the World," which turned out to be nothing more or less than an elaboration of the title of the Declaration: "Save the League; Save Peace"—in itself a fallacy, judging by the past. Sharp came the ironic commentary no later than next day. On January 2 it was officially announced that there was signed at noon by the British Ambassador at Rome and the Italian Foreign Minister an Agreement in which England and Italy declared, in effect, that they had settled their differences with respect to the Mediterranean.

This excellent news did not come from Geneva. Yet it was the League, egged on and backed up by our self-styled "National" Government, that had created those very differences and done nothing to compose them—differences which for quite a considerable time threatened the peace of Europe, so acute was the tension they produced between England and Italy. Faced by realities, our Government has completely dispensed with the League—"gone behind its back," it will no doubt be said—and this Agreement is the happy result, the plain truth being that we cannot afford to have Italy as an enemy in the Mediterranean, but must keep on friendly terms with her.

## An Amazing Document

The first of those two highly contrasted Declarations, that is, the call to "save the League," is a most curious, indeed, an amazing document, as it absolutely ignores all the recent history of the Geneva Institution. It was signed by three Conservatives, three Labour M.P.s, three Liberals, and three others—the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Cecil and Professor Gilbert Murray. Winston Churchill headed the Conservative trio and Lloyd George the Liberal; the Labour group consisted of Attlee, Hugh Dalton and P. J. Noel-Baker. No member of the Government signed it, but in this connection it should be noted that Mr. Baldwin, in his New Year message to the Primrose League, spoke of "our obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations."

Yet it was in endeavouring to fulfil those obligations, as Mr. Baldwin conceived them to be during the sheet-anchor phase of his policy, that there originated those very differences with Signor Mussolini which were so serious as to render necessary this new Agreement. Nobody will be silly enough to assert that this pact is a victory in any sense for the League; it is, on the contrary, another defeat for the Institution, another testimony to its proved incompetence, another intimation that in all the big political questions affecting the international situation it is of no use whatever. Nor is

it too much to say that not one State has confidence in its power to "save peace"; many States now think it is much more likely to bring war.

This save-the-League Declaration begins: "In every country there is talk of war, and in some countries attacks have openly been made upon the League of Nations and the principle of collective security." The second clause of that sentence is a truly sublime example of understatement, the fact being that the League and collective security, as associated with it, have alike been discredited by what the Germans call the "dynamic of events," the upshot appearing in the formation of groups of big States in accordance with what they consider their vital interests, and the attachment of the small States to one or other of them for precisely identical motives. Europe is divided.

The Declaration proceeds to state that war can be averted and a stable peace permanently maintained if the nation-members of the League will now make plain their determination to fulfil their obligations under the Covenant, and take measures required for the prevention of aggression, *including, if necessary, military action*. Only so, it continues contradictorily, will the *peaceful* settlement of international disputes become possible. The key word in this bit of hocus-pocus is the little word *if*. . . if. The one thing that is certain is that the nation-members of the League will not now or in any near future, any more than in the past, make plain their determination to stand by the Covenant, which is, being interpreted, the League.

## Divorced from Realities

"If the members of the League are united," concludes this precious Declaration, "their joint strength will be so overwhelming that no intending aggressor will venture to refuse the settlement of disputes or other outstanding questions by peaceful means." Here is another "if," and it is of a piece with the whole of this fatuous document, which is utterly divorced from the realities of the present time. The members of the League are not united; they are as divided as is Europe, and surely the depth of that division is convincingly manifested in the International War now going on in Spain?

Day by day the war in Spain becomes not less, but more of a danger to the peace of Europe. What has the League done about it, or, rather, what can the League do? The answer was given at its last meeting when the representative of the Valencia Government stated its case, and the League did nothing for the simple but sufficient reason that it could do nothing. None of the erstwhile leaders of the League thought it worth while even to attend. That was the measure of the League's impotence. Yet we have this absurd call to save the League, when there is no chance of saving it! That in itself, however, is a very good thing.

# The Rise in Prices

By Our City Editor

**T**HE financial feature of 1936 was the rise in prices and this advance seems likely to continue to provide the outstanding feature in 1937. On the year Wheat has risen from under 7s. to over 10s. per cwt., Maize from 16s. 1d. to 24s. a quarter, Copper from £35 to £49 per ton, Cotton from 6.4d. to over 7d. a lb., and Rubber from 6½d. to nearly 11d. per lb. The all-round strength of commodities has been reflected in a rise in securities prices so that the Bankers' Magazine index shows values of variable dividend stocks and shares to be 14.6 per cent. up on the year, while even fixed interest securities are 1.1 per cent. higher. It is of interest to note where the advances have been most pronounced. In Foreign Rails there has been a rise of over 70 per cent., which has yet to prove justified, while Mining shares are over 50 per cent. up; Oil shares have risen by 45 per cent., Iron and Steel shares by 41 per cent., British Rails ordinary stocks by 37 per cent. and Rubber shares by a similar percentage. Nor has the rise in commodity prices been confined to security price effects, for the wholesale prices index number (1930=100) is up from 89 to over 98, and retail food prices are up from 125 to 136. Wages lag somewhat behind the price rise, but when the rise in commodity prices is passed on further and faster to wholesale and retail prices, then it is time for the holder of ordinary stocks and shares to look for the peak of the "boom" in equities.

## The Cost of Defence

With the New Year comes the realisation that the nation's financial year is drawing to a close, and that the time of reckoning approaches when the nation must count the cost of delay in Britain's re-armament so far as it can be assessed in £ s. d. So far, i.e., for the first nine months of the financial year, there has been an increase of £7,370,000 in revenue, but expenditure is up by £32,198,000 and the deficit to date is £138,854,000 against £114,000,000 a year ago. The Chancellor's optimistic estimates in regard to stamp duties and customs and excise have proved to be fully justified, but the continued pressure of income tax and death duties, which work so largely on classes who have not benefited in any way from the cheap money boom, but have rather suffered thereby, is proving to be a mistake.

Although income tax payments fall mainly in the last quarter of the year and the figures for the first nine months cannot give an accurate estimate, yet the fact that income tax receipts are so far £2,910,000 down does not promise well for an increase of nearly £23,000,000 on the year as estimated by the Chancellor. The increase of £32,000,000 in expenditure is almost entirely due to Navy, Army and Air Force requirements, but it would seem obvious that this amount represents a

very small proportion of the total cost of re-armament carried out on such expensive, frantic, and hurried lines as those now being followed. Sooner or later, the rise in prices and the artificial "cheap money" policy must clash. Presumably before this happens, the Government will produce what looks to be a reasonably profitable loan to finance the real cost of defence.

## Fluctuations in Rubber

To judge by the reaction shown by Rubber shares, many were taken by surprise by the sharp fall in the commodity last week after its spectacular rise to 11½d. per lb. But the rise was altogether too rapid not to be accompanied by some severe reaction and the New Year holiday was a further inducement to profit-taking. As the price descended from 10½d. to 10d. per lb. in a day, however, it is doubtful whether many were able to secure their profit, and speculators were certainly rendered nervous by the movement. The statistical position remains extremely strong, and if consumption is maintained at present levels, the commodity seems destined to command higher prices, at least until the larger production quota becomes effective in supplying the market with sufficient Rubber to arrest the continued fall in stocks. The International Rubber Regulation Committee has done everything possible to prevent undue fluctuations in the price, but once a shortage of "spot" became apparent there were bound to be some fireworks. Meanwhile, the shares of the producing companies are well worth acquiring on any such reaction as that which has just occurred and among low-priced shares United Serdang 2s. units at 5s. 3d. look as attractive as any, while attention is also being given to Kuala Kangsar at 3s. 9d.

## Two Aircraft Meetings

Two recent meetings of aircraft construction companies were instructive in different ways. The Chairman of Fairey Aviation showed a full realisation of the strain and difficulties placed upon the companies by the Government's armaments rush, and he was doubtful if the margin of profit allowed was going to prove ample compensation for the loss of a carefully-built up export trade. In view of the difficulty experienced by armaments firms after the War in obtaining settlement of their claims, Mr. Fairey's anxiety and caution seem well justified.

The second meeting was that of British Marine Aircraft, whose shareholders surprisingly showed no opposition to a complete change in the company's programme. Instead of making Sikorsky flying-boats, for which it was formed, the company is now engaged on temporarily profitable sub-contracting work. It remains to be seen whether the company can revert to its original programme when this work comes to an end.



## RACING

# Lady Houston's Racehorses

By David Learmonth

**A**LTHOUGH she never raced on a large scale Lady Houston nevertheless took an active interest in the turf and had definite views on a number of aspects, particularly the racing of two-year-olds.

She would never allow a two-year-old of her own to run and held the view, with some justification, that the running of animals so young was not in the best interests of racing. She felt that to run an animal that was immature was to prejudice not only its future career on the Turf but its stud value as well.

Lady Houston was an enthusiast for sea air and sea water and often sent her horses to where they could be exercised on the beach. Her theory was that a course of sea water was not only good for the legs but for the feet and the whole system as well, and she was of the opinion that the iodine that is present in sea water worked through the pores of the skin with beneficial results.

There is little doubt that R. B. Bennett, whom she named after the Prime Minister of Canada, was the best horse Lady Houston owned, certainly in recent years. He rendered her yeoman service and kept his form for several seasons, though he is now high in the handicap and probably not as good as he once was.

R. B. Bennett was a great favourite of her's; partly, I think, because he had lived up to a name which she had given him as a compliment to a man whose character she greatly admired, and partly because of R. B. Bennett's courage and genuine-

ness. There was nothing Lady Houston admired more than courage and nothing she detested more than lack of determination.

Although during recent years Lady Houston's health did not permit her to attend the racecourses to see her horses run, she occasionally had a small bet, and on occasions she backed her horses for the benefit of her staff, dividing the proceeds among them as a present if they won.

Her colours, red, white and blue, were characteristic of her political views, and she once told her representative that she would have had a Union Jack if this had been possible. Actually Union Jack colours have been registered on one occasion within my own knowledge, by a well-known Devonshire licensee, but I believe this registration was allowed to lapse.

Lady Houston had the true Englishwoman's love of a horse and she must be counted among those who race for the sheer love of the game and form the backbone of the Turf. She trusted her trainers' judgment to a very large extent, particularly during the last part of her life; but if she gave a definite instruction she rightly expected it to be carried out to the letter.

She raced under both rules, but most of her successes were scored on the flat, purchases of steeplechasers on her behalf not being too fortunate on the whole. Her Red Park, however, won one or two nice steeplechases with a light weight, though he hardly fulfilled expectations.

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## CINEMA

## "Ramona"

BY MARK FORREST

THE New Year has not so far been graced by any outstanding productions, and the new films last week were made up of very usual ingredients. There are, however, some big productions promised in the near future, and I hope that 1937 will see British pictures taking a real step forward, instead of walking crabwise.

The most ambitious production of last week is *Ramona*, which is at the Tivoli. This film, like *The Garden of Allah*, is a familiar one to cinema-goers, and its resurrection, again like *The Garden of Allah*, is due to Technicolor.

This time *Ramona* is played by Loretta Young instead of Dolores del Rio, and the story, unless my memory is at fault, appears to have undergone some drastic revision, especially in its closing stages. Once more, like *The Garden of Allah*, there is very little about which one can be cheerful, and nothing about which there can be any depth of feeling in this tale of a half-caste girl who is brought up by a Spanish lady of the old régime, and rewards her by falling in love with an Indian.

## Happy Ending

Helped by the Señora's son, Ramona escapes with her lover, marries him and sees her new home seized by American settlers. Searching for new lands she forges westward, only to lose her child by exposure and her husband by a bullet. To provide a happy ending the Señora's son appears conveniently upon the heels of the funeral, and the manner in which she falls into his arms shows that it shouldn't be long before the other half of the caste is compensated.

This is a very gloomy affair, unfolded at a very slow pace and dragged out to over 7,500 feet. However, a good deal of it is taken in the open air, and the colour is so good in places that one's interest is held just watching the effects. There is no doubt that this is the best attempt that has yet been made under the technicolour process. Loretta Young's Ramona doesn't give one much idea that her parentage is other than what one would have imagined, but Don Ameche's Alessandre looks realistic enough. That old favourite of the stage, Pauline Frederick, has the rôle of the proud Spanish lady, and her son is attractively played by Kent Taylor. No one, unfortunately, can do very much with the dialogue, which is ponderous.

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## THEATRE NOTES

## "The Soul of Nicholas Snyders"

Arts Theatre

By Jerome K. Jerome

THIS was excellent Christmas holiday fare: traditional, generous, and at times creepy, it is in fact a well drawn study of a lowland Scrooge. A miser who has the whole township in his power, including the beautiful Christina (Miss Ena Moon) his maid of all work, buys from a pedlar a wine that has the virtue of allowing you to change souls with any person who partakes of it with you.

When old Nicholas has in this way possessed himself of the youthful and sympathetic soul of a sea captain in love with Christina, there is not only an increase in the comic power, but the simple episode becomes rather more than a mere fairy story, for it has intelligence and understanding beyond the measure of most fantasies. It takes on the penetration of the best legendary histories, and lends itself to very capable acting by the chief characters. Edward Stirling as the miser, Miss Pollie Emery as the toothless hag he originally proposed to marry, are very fine, whilst Peter Copley, as the sea captain with the translated soul, gives conviction to his lines, and the general effect is to make one accept as living and present the atmosphere of the past world they are supposed to inhabit.

## "Strange Incident"

Arts Theatre

By Clive Desmond

POOR entertainment, this, that could hardly be rescued from tedium by the most commendable efforts of the cast. It depicted the improbable history of a beautiful girl, Ruth (played by Miss Iris Baker), who in her naughty youth was indiscreet enough to be saved from a serious scandal by an Italian nobleman whose high chivalry did not go well with his dubious friends. She made the further mistake of marrying Lord Davenant, a man of peerless uprightness and ignorance of the world he lived in, and the gossip tongues of a scandal-mongering set of Monte Carlo socialites forced her husband to insult the Italian nobleman, though with true English gentility he refused to duel and allowed the dago to take the libel to law.

Mr. Richard Goolden, as the octogenarian gossip, alone had a part worth playing, and he did it, as one would expect, very creditably: otherwise the plot and the characters seldom surpassed the dialogue, of which the abysmal and ingenuous futility may be represented by Don Marco's exclamation to his lawyer: "Shield myself by striking at a woman, by God, sir, no!"

## "Puss in Boots"

Lyceum

PUSS in Boots is a fine pantomime for all children of all ages, with rollicking entertainment by Clarkson Rose as Dave Tickle, and Jack Barty as King. Miss Marjorie Sandford is captivating as Jack, and puss is deliciously feline as presented by Jack Hurst. The ballet by children and the sets were pleasing to look at.